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SUBJECT: DARFUR: USG CAN SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESSFUL UN/AU
PROCESS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 00208

- [1](#)B. KHARTOUM 01043
- [1](#)C. KHARTOUM 01006
- [1](#)D. KHARTOUM 01230
- [1](#)E. KHARTOUM 01190
- [1](#)F. KHARTOUM 01181
- [1](#)G. KHARTOUM 01172
- [1](#)H. KHARTOUM 01187

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Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) The United Nations and African Union have developed a timetable for the Darfur political process that culminates in negotiations between the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories and the Sudanese Government in early October.

However, unrealistic expectations of the outcome of these negotiations, enduring rivalries within the fractured rebel movements, and inadequate representation of the movements' armed wings in the peace process risk derailing the talks. UN and AU officials in Khartoum emphasize that the focus of the negotiations should be on addressing the reasonable grievances of the DPA non-signatories and brokering an agreement that will address the most pressing issue affecting Darfur: security. While the negotiations are unlikely to lead to a definitive resolution of the Darfur conflict, an agreement that accounts for the core grievances of the DPA non-signatories and leads to a sustainable cessation of hostilities--guaranteed by the deployment of the UN/AU hybrid peacekeeping force--would pave the way for reconciliation in the long-term. See para. 11 for specific actions that the USG can take to shore up the UN/AU peace process and lay the foundation for a successful outcome from the negotiations.
End summary.

UN/AU's Fall Timeline

[1](#)2. (SBU) UN and AU officials have outlined a plan for the Darfur peace process for August and September, culminating in the start of negotiations in early October. For the remainder of August, the UN/AU will concentrate on finalizing

a date and venue for the talks. After UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and AU Chairman Alpha Omar Konare issue the invitations in early September, the UN/AU will begin to "shuttle" between the Darfur rebel factions and the Sudanese government to narrow positions on the key issues outlined in the Arusha communique (power sharing, wealth sharing, security arrangements, land, and humanitarian issues). Simultaneously, the UN and AU will develop a precise agenda for the negotiations, define a timeframe to underscore the talks will not be open-ended, and articulate precise roles for the international community and regional governments (Chad, Libya, and Eritrea) in the negotiations.

Fractured Rebel Movements

¶3. (SBU) Without an initial effort, led by the UN and AU, to consolidate some of the rebel factions and improve internal communication between the political leaders and the military commanders in the field, it is difficult to see how the UN and AU will facilitate a common negotiating platform among the rebels during September's "shuttle diplomacy" phase--particularly among the armed factions that effect the security situation. Since early 2006, reports from Darfur indicate that the commanders of the armed movements--who, with the exception of the Sudanese government, have the greatest direct influence on the security environment in Darfur--are frustrated with the region's political leaders (Ref. A). Since May, the USG has advocated for an effort to bring more cohesion among the rebel factions as a precondition for successful negotiations. Participants at an AU-sponsored conference in late June--which included representatives from the National Congress Party (NCP), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), the AU, the UN, the U.S., the UK, the Netherlands, and Canada--reiterated the necessity of repairing the breach between the political and military wings of the rebel movements (Ref. B). Until recently, Pekka

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Haavisto, the Senior Advisor to UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson, and Sam Ibok, AU co-chair of the Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST), identified the rift between the rebels' political leadership and the commanders in the field as an immediate priority (Ref. C).

¶4. (SBU) During an August 19 briefing for Western diplomats in Khartoum, Haavisto acknowledged rebel leaders contend that October negotiations are unfeasible and that they need time (and assistance) to foster unity and better internal organization within the movements. Reversing his previous stance, however, Haavisto said that "we should not give them the luxury of time--they should come (to the negotiations) as they are." By contrast, former SLM humanitarian coordinator Suleiman Jamous, a respected and unifying figure for many of the rebel factions, warned in a recent media interview that a lack of organization within the movements prior to negotiations could lead to further factionalism. "It is better to work towards unity for the SLA at least before ending the peace talks with any sort of agreement," Jamous told Reuters in late July.

Rift Hinders Development of Negotiating Platform

¶5. (SBU) During an August 7 briefing in Khartoum, Eliasson applauded the collegiality of the various factions throughout the Arusha discussions (Ref. D): "They are all cousins and schoolmates and were all one group comfortable together." UN and AU officials in Khartoum admit, however, that the discussions were general and that the commanders around Abdullah Yehia--the only formidable armed faction represented--did not participate, in protest of Jamous' continued detention. First-hand accounts of the Arusha

meeting indicate that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance (SFDA) led by Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige largely drove the agenda, with mixed buy-in from participants like Abdullah Yehia--who commands the largest, best-armed faction in Darfur. While JEM and the SFDA remain the most sophisticated and well-prepared among the factions, it is less clear that they can change the security dynamic on the ground. While Yehia and others may accede to general principles, such as those presented in the Arusha communique, such acquiescence will not be sustainable in the long-term without addressing the fundamental structural problems between the political and military wings of the movements. Recent reports, corroborated by Ibok, indicate that even the traditionally cohesive JEM is on the verge of splintering. Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda--who led the JEM delegation at Arusha--is now threatening to split from JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim and join a powerful JEM commander to form a new movement.

¶6. (SBU) While a positive first step, Ibok (please strictly protect) acknowledged in an August 21 conversation with Poloff that the most contentious issues were not included in the Arusha communique: self-determination and autonomy for Darfur outside the timeline set by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and retention of forces rather than re-integration into the national military. According to Ibok, the movements do not consider Darfur as bound by the CPA or the National Interim Constitution and have little understanding that the end state of the current negotiations are only valid until 2009. In addition, persisting rivalries among the rebels will cripple discussions on power sharing.

IDPs, Civil Society Share Goal of Security

¶7. (SBU) The UN and AU continue to seek to involve civil society and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the negotiating process. A common theme among these groups is the need for stability and freedom of movement (Ref. E). Yet the situation on the ground remains complex, and the discussion lacks any comprehensive analysis. Because IDPs perceive many traditional leaders as ineffectual, NGOs in the camps have organized groups of "new sheikhs" to coordinate assistance and provide organization (Ref. F), making it difficult to determine who represents which constituency. The Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) has completed a first round of consultations with IDPs in Darfur;

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the preliminary findings are being used to inform the UN/AU strategy for the negotiating process. UN civil affairs efforts to produce "IDP profiles" also remain preliminary (Ref. F). While many Darfur watchers note the absence of independent civil society organizations in the region, initiatives to involve civil society in a peace process abound, with little linkage to political developments at the national and international level (Ref. G). During interviews with Emboff in late July, IDPs listed security, individual compensation, and reconstruction and development as their priorities, in descending order of importance (Ref. F). In recent conversations with Poloff, both a senior AU official and a mid-level UN official in Khartoum underscored that the upcoming negotiations must focus on improving the security environment, which would then lay the foundation for addressing IDPs and civil society's other concerns.

Abdulwahid's Continued Obstruction

¶8. (SBU) SLM leader Abdulwahid al Nur has been adept at capitalizing on the complex sentiments of the IDP camps. In discussions with the UN and AU, Abdulwahid has proposed a series of meetings of his SLM faction that conflict with the UN/AU timeline. According to a UN official in El Fasher,

Abdulwahid is "bargaining with the misery of the IDPs" (Ref. H). His support, however, may be more tenuous than is generally perceived. During his mid-August visit to Sudan, Eliasson traveled to several IDP camps to highlight the consequences of Abdulwahid's continued absence from the UN/AU political process. "Eliasson told them that if Abdulwahid is not at the talks, the camps' voices will not be heard," Ibok told Poloff on August 21. According to a UN official, a panicked Abdulwahid called Eliasson a day after his visit to the camps and for the first time expressed an interest in participating in a UN/AU-sponsored meeting. He later rescinded this offer, and the UN/AU plan to continue attempts to cut into Abdulwahid's base. During his August 21-29 visit to Sudan, AU Special Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim plans to visit Zalingei, the locus of Abdulwahid's support, and deliver a message similar to Eliasson's. The UN and AU have also encouraged Diraige and SLM faction leader Ahmed Abdulshafie to conduct their own outreach in the camps.

¶9. (SBU) The UN/AU continue to call on the international community to "turn up" the pressure on Abdulwahid, a request they have made for several months without proposing specific actions (Ref. C). However, on August 18, a senior AU official provided Poloff with the most strident call yet: If Abdulwahid does not indicate his intention to attend the October negotiations, France should "kick him out," and he should not be allowed to seek refuge elsewhere in Europe.

Effective Contact Group Essential

¶10. (SBU) While the UN and AU continue to consult the international community on the road ahead, foreign governments' most important role will be in exerting leverage on the parties to compromise once negotiations begin, according to representatives from both organizations. Recent discussions with UN and AU officials in Khartoum underscore the necessity of an effective contact group that can target pressure on both the rebels and the Sudanese government to forge a peace agreement. While the "Tripoli Format" (Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, China, France, Russia, UK, U.S., Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, EU, and the Arab League) remains too unwieldy to be effective, a sub-group composed of members with leverage on the rebels, the Sudanese government, and regional actors could support the UN/AU mediators and back-brief the larger group throughout the negotiations. The UN and AU concede that Chad, Libya, and Eritrea will play an influential role in the negotiating process. A senior AU official suggested, however, that a contact group composed of the U.S., EU, France, and China might balance this influence. The U.S. is seen by most rebel groups and much of the international community as the guarantor of a final agreement (Ref. B), while the EU and France could exert necessary leverage on regional actors and rebel leaders with ties to Europe, such as Abdulwahid. Given Beijing's oft-repeated emphasis on a political process to complement the UN/AU

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hybrid, China could be a moderating influence on the Sudanese government. The senior AU official underlined the importance of U.S. leadership in forming such a contact group, noting the helpful role that S/E Natsios played during the Tripoli II summit in rallying countries behind the UN and AU.

USG Support for the Political Process

¶11. (SBU) The USG can take several specific actions in the near future to shore-up the UN/AU peace process and lay the strongest foundation possible for the negotiations:

-- Publicly outline realistic expectations for the outcome of the negotiations. A U.S. statement--preferably with the explicit backing of several international partners--should

call for an agreement that addresses the reasonable grievances of the DPA non-signatories and includes a cessation of hostilities. In conjunction with the deployment of an effective UN/AU hybrid peace-keeping force, such an agreement would pave the way for a stable Darfur and provide an enabling environment for reconciliation, reconstruction, and development.

-- Make a declaration of support for the CPA and its interim arrangements, with explicit reference to their relevance for Darfur. Such a declaration would highlight our view that the CPA is the way forward for the whole of Sudan and would strengthen the UN/AU's hand with the rebel groups.

-- Encourage the UN and AU to develop a strategy for repairing the rift between the political and military elements of the rebel movements. Underscore that the development of rebel negotiating positions--including the input of armed factions with direct influence on the security environment--is predicated on greater cohesion and organization within the rebel factions.

-- In consultation with the UN, AU, and European partners, develop a set of triggers for action against rebel groups that obstruct the peace process. While the UN/AU have called for triggers in the past (Ref. C), we must bring specificity to this threat in order to make it credible. The most obvious benchmark would be participation in the October negotiations.

-- Build support among the governments of the "Tripoli Format" for an effective sub-group to target leverage on the rebel movements, the Sudanese government, and the regional actors during the negotiations and to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

¶12. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
POWERS